

The Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions.

1. (previously presented) A network comprising a plurality of network nodes, characterized in that at least part of the network nodes are directly coupled to each other via at least one star node,
in that the star node includes a plurality of star interfaces which are assigned to at least one network node,
in that one star interface transfers data from the assigned network node to the other star interfaces or from another star interface to at least one of the assigned network nodes each time in dependence on a pilot signal, and
in the event of simultaneous arrival of at least two pilot signals at the respective star interfaces, a decision circuit releases one star interface for the transmission of data.
2. (previously presented) A network as claimed in claim 1, characterized
in that to each network node in the network a certain periodically repetitive time slot is assigned for the transmission of data, and
in that a network node includes a pilot signal generator which generates a pilot signal that either indicates the whole assigned time slot, or the beginning and the end of the time slot.
3. (original) A network as claimed in claim 1, characterized
in that a pilot signal evaluation circuit is provided for generating a send control signal, in that the pilot signal evaluation circuit is provided for activating the send control signal if a pilot signal has been sent by the assigned network node and no other star interface having a higher priority has simultaneously sent a pilot signal from the network node assigned to this other star interface, and
in that a star interface is provided for transferring data from the assigned network node to the other star interfaces only when the send control signal is activated.

4. (currently amended) A network as claimed in claim 3, characterized in that each star interface includes a first and a second switching element, in that the first switching element in an activated state passes data from the assigned network node to the other star interfaces and the second switching element in an activated state passes data from the other star interfaces to the assigned network node, and in the event of receiving an active send control signal, the first switching element is in ~~the~~ an active state and the second switching element is in a non-active state.

5. (original) A network as claimed in claim 4, characterized in that the first and second switching elements are each a switchable amplifier.

6. (previously presented) A network as claimed in claim 5, characterized in that the decision circuit evaluates the send control signals of all the star interfaces, and with a simultaneous occurrence of various send control signals, the decision circuit releases via a decision control signal a certain star interface for the transmission of data.

7. (previously presented) A network as claimed in claim 6, characterized in that the decision circuit includes a chain of in-line decision elements each having an OR gate, in that each OR gate combines the output signal of the previous decision element with a local send request signal generated by the pilot signal evaluation circuit and indicating the presence of the pilot signal, and in that the output signal of an OR gate is the decision control signal for the star interface assigned to the next decision element in the chain.

8. (previously presented) A network as claimed in claim 7, characterized in that the decision circuit includes a decision decoder decoding the send control signals, and a 1-from-m decoder receiving the output signals of the decision decoder, which 1-from-m decoder generates a respective decision control signal for the respective star interfaces.

9. (currently amended) A star node in a network for coupling a plurality of network nodes, characterized in that a star node includes a plurality of star interfaces which are assigned to at least one network node and which, in dependence on a pilot signal, transfer a message from the assigned network node to the other star interfaces, or from another star interface to at least one of the assigned network nodes, and in the event of simultaneous arrival of at least two pilot signals, a decision circuit releases one star interface for the transmission of data.